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Gorbachev Could Be the One to Find Wallenberg

By BILL PAUL

To: Mikhail S. Gorbachev
 The Kremlin, Moscow

Seize the moment, Mr. Gorbachev. Now that Andrei Gromyko has retired, order a search for Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Jews from the Nazis.

It was Mr. Gromyko who told the world in 1957 that Raoul Wallenberg had died of a heart attack in a Soviet prison in 1947. As long as Mr. Gromyko was in power, you of course had to tread lightly on the issue of whether Mr. Wallenberg might still be alive, as many eyewitnesses have claimed over the years.

But I believe that you—unlike Mr. Gromyko and the heads of state he served, including Josef Stalin—don't think Mr. Wallenberg was a spy. Your prime minister, Nikolai Ryzhkov, said in a speech in Stockholm a few months ago that Mr. Wallenberg was a great humanitarian.

From news reports, I know you recently had a hand in construction of a new monument to Mr. Wallenberg in Budapest, the city where he performed his miracle. Your predecessors ordered the original monument removed to a provincial pharmacological college, where it stands today without identifying marks.

I further know from press reports that your government is concerned about its

own unreturned heroes—prisoners of war whom Afghan resistance leaders have acknowledged holding. That's a far cry from the days when the Stalin regime had returning Russian POWs shot on the docks of Odessa because, in Stalin's view, a Russian soldier who allowed himself to be taken prisoner was a traitor.

Please find Mr. Wallenberg, Mr. Gorbachev. As his brother noted in a speech in Philadelphia one year ago, Raoul Wallenberg may be buried alive in your prison system, a nameless inmate who even you, Mr. Gorbachev, may think died long ago.



Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Gorbachev, there's no question your predecessors lied about what happened to Mr. Wallenberg. In 1947, the Soviet deputy foreign minister Andrei Vyshinsky said that "Wallenberg is not in the Soviet Union," and that "he is unknown to us." But then, in announcing Mr. Wallenberg's death in 1957, Mr. Gromyko said Mr. Wallenberg had in fact been a Soviet prisoner in 1947. So why

when Mr. Gromyko says, as he did in 1957, that Mr. Wallenberg died of a heart attack, should we—or you—believe him?

Recent press reports have noted that you've already got the KGB trying to find out what happened to the victims of Stalin's purges so that today the victims' relatives might find some inner peace. To find Mr. Wallenberg, you might want to start at the Bingoveshchenka labor camp, where a new book by Swedish author Kenne Fant says Mr. Wallenberg was seen in 1956 by "a very trustworthy source."

To millions of people, Raoul Wallenberg is a hero, a courageous humanitarian who stared down the Nazis—who were your enemy as well as ours, Mr. Gorbachev.

And, while you're searching for Mr. Wallenberg, please also search for the many German, Italian, French and other POWs from World War II whom your predecessors wouldn't release after the war. Indeed, your predecessors wouldn't even cooperate with a United Nations commission that, between 1950 and 1957, tried unsuccessfully to get your nation to return voluntarily these thousands of men.

I think you'll even find some American soldiers there, too.

Mr. Paul, a reporter in the Journal's New York bureau, has written previously on efforts to locate missing U.S. soldiers.

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